



**Director of
Central
Intelligence**

Secret

Reassessment of the Status of Soviet Ground Forces Divisions

Interagency Intelligence Memorandum

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REASSESSMENT OF THE STATUS OF SOVIET GROUND FORCES DIVISIONS

Information as of 13 March 1981 was
used in the preparation of this Memorandum.

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OVERVIEW

The Intelligence Community has added 10 low-strength divisions, formerly considered inactive, to the order of battle for the Soviet Ground Forces. This increases our inventory of the number of active divisions—that is, divisions with a permanent cadre of officers and some enlisted personnel—from 174 to 184. This change does not, however, reflect a sudden move by the Soviets to increase the size of their army. Rather, it results from a reassessment of the continuing program of modernization and gradual expansion of the Ground Forces that has been under way in the USSR since at least 1965.

The reassessment is based on a detailed examination of the physical characteristics of the Soviet low-strength divisions¹ and a better understanding of how the Warsaw Pact structures its forces in peacetime. It also rests, in part, on new evidence which indicates that divisions may be active even though they are manned at less than 10 percent of their authorized wartime strength. Heretofore, the US Intelligence Community has used the 10-percent manning level as the principal criterion for distinguishing between active and inactive divisions.

In light of the evidence, the Community has partially revised its categorization descriptions to reflect the fact that a division manned at below 10 percent can be regarded as part of the active force if it meets certain other criteria. Essentially, these criteria include as element of the active force those divisions which have a full-time cadre of officers and enlisted personnel and which engage in routine training. The inactive divisions apparently consist of unit equipment sets to which only maintenance and security personnel are assigned and which do not routinely train.

This reassessment will have little effect on current estimates of the USSR's ability to mobilize forces for operations against NATO. It does, however, recognize an actual increase in Soviet forces for the Far East, where five of the 10 divisions redesignated as a result of this change have been activated in the past three years. Three of the divisions are located in the principal military districts where forces are oriented against NATO, and these were activated before 1973. The remaining two divisions are located in the Moscow and Turkestan Military Districts. (See map.)

Note: This Interagency Intelligence Memorandum was prepared under the auspices of the National Intelligence Officer for General Purpose Forces. It was drafted jointly by the Central Intelligence Agency and the Defense Intelligence Agency, coordinated within the Intelligence Community, and approved for publication by NFIB principals.

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